

Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP)



From its inception in 1775, the Marine Corps has distinguished itself as a Martial Culture. The legacy of the Corps is built upon the close combat of ships of sail, the storming of the bois de Belleau, the holding of “Bloody Ridge” on Guadalcanal and in recent times, the Iraq and Afghanistan Campaigns. In order to better prepare Marines for the conflicts to come, the 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James L. Jones, envisioned a program that would provide Marines the tools with which to conduct Military Operations in Urban Terrain and to realize the potential of every Marine as a warrior. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP), managed by the Martial Arts Center of Excellence (MACE), is the product of that vision.

The Martial Arts Program is based

on five, colored-belt levels with six different degrees of black belt. Each belt level is broken down into three disciplines, each of which a Marine must become proficient in before attaining the next belt level. The mental, character, and physical disciplines of the warrior are the foundation of the Martial Arts Program. The mental discipline consists of warrior studies, martial culture studies, combative behavior studies, and other professional military education. The character discipline is built around the Marine Corps’ core values: Honor, Courage, and Commitment, and troop information. The character discipline stresses the role of the “ethical” warrior on and off the battlefield 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The physical discipline consists of the physical techniques taught throughout the five belt levels. The

physical discipline also encompasses the Combat Conditioning Program that is a part of the Corps Functional Fitness. Through the successful synergy of these disciplines at each belt level, a Marine will enhance their own warrior spirit and tactical cunning.

The following are the belt levels from beginner to expert, with a description of some of the lessons, and prerequisites for each belt:

- **Tan Belt** - Basic techniques and an introduction to the martial culture. There are no prerequisites for this belt. It is designed for the entry-level, basically trained Marine. All Marines attending boot camp at Parris Island and San Diego graduate as Tan belt Marines. All officers graduating at The Basic School graduate, at a minimum, as Tan belt Marines.
- **Gray Belt**. Expansion on basic techniques, introduction to ground fighting and force continuum. The prerequisites for this belt are a recommendation from the commanding officer, complete Tan belt sustainment and integration training, and complete MCI 03.3 Fundamentals of Marine Corps Leadership. There are 32 training hours and seven sustainment hours for this belt.
- **Green Belt**. Expansion on Gray Belt techniques, weapons integration / team integration training, and an introduction to free sparring. The prerequisites for this belt are a recommendation from the commanding officer, complete Gray belt sustainment and integration training, Lance Corporal or above, and appropriate level PME complete. There are 30 training hours and 14 sustainment hours for this belt.
- **Green Belt Instructor**. This is the first belt level that is designated as Martial Art Instructor in accordance with the MCMAP program of instruction. The prerequisites for this belt are a recommendation from the commanding officer, complete Gray belt sustainment and integration training, Corporal or above, appropriate level PME complete, Physical Fitness Test score of 225 or higher, and a second-class swim qualification (there are thousands of instructor trained Marines throughout the Marine Corps).
- **Brown Belt**. Expansion on Green Belt techniques, weapons integration/team integration training, free sparring, and basic firearm retention and disarmament techniques. The prerequisites for this belt are a recommendation from the commanding officer, complete Green belt sustainment and integration training, Corporal or above, and appropriate level PME complete. There are 35.5 training hours and 28 sustainment hours for this belt.
- **Black Belt. 1st Degree** - Expert techniques, counters to pistol presentations, advanced anatomy and physiology. The prerequisites for this belt are a recommendation from the commanding officer, complete Brown belt sustainment and integration training, Sergeant or above, appropriate level PME complete. All career Marines should earn their Black belt within eight years of their initial qualification as a Tan belt. There are 34.5 training hours and 28 sustainment hours for this belt (there are more than 1,000 trained instructor trainers around the Corps).
- **Black Belt. 2nd to 6th Degree** - Marines designated as Instructors or Instructor Trainers, Military Occupational Specialty 8551 and 8552, respectively, are authorized to advance to these belt levels. The emphasis in these degrees is placed on giving back to the program, unit training, professional studies on martial cultures, and advanced skills within the martial arts program. The MACE is the only organization in the Corps that has the

authority to promote to these levels.

The MCMAP techniques, complemented with subsequent training and sustainment to more advanced levels, provide every Marine with the ability and confidence to fight in hand-to-hand combat using any weapon available. The techniques also provide every Marine the self-discipline to understand the responsible use of force, both on and off the battlefield. The effective use of these two disciplines ensures the Marine Corps will win our nation's wars by being the most ready when the Nation is least ready, and secure the peace in the same battle. With the knowledge of the spectrum of violence (force continuum) taught during Gray Belt training, and the combination of non-lethal techniques taught in Tan Belt, Marines are equipped with the ability to effectively engage in the growing trend of Military Operation other than War (MOOTW).

The MACE is located at Raider Hall in Quantico, VA, on the west side of Interstate 95. From Raider Hall, the MACE conducts four Martial Arts Instructor Trainer (MAIT) courses and six to eight Martial Art Instructor (MAI) courses per year. Upon completion of the physically demanding, seven-week MAIT course, a Marine earns status as a First Degree Black Belt, a Martial Arts Instructor Trainer, a Combat Conditioning Specialist and qualified in CPR. The minimum requirements to attend the course are: must be a Green Belt Martial Arts Instructor, rank of Sergeant or above, 225 minimum score on the Physical Fitness Test, and a 2nd

Class Swim Qualification.

The MACE held a Course Curriculum Review Board (CCRB) in January 2007 to conduct a review of all techniques and disciplines. All change recommendations were submitted up the chain for consideration. Final outcome of the CCRB will be published via message traffic, the monthly newsletter and put on the MACE website. The board consisted of members from around the Corps. The purpose of the CCRB was to improve the program in its current application and discuss future training priorities in accordance with the Marine Corps' mission.

The MACE continues to support Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Joint Task Forces, and deployed forces in support of Operation Iraq Freedom. In 2007, the MACE will conduct a number of Mobile Training Team's (MTT) on the east and west coasts for recertification, belt advancements, and combat conditioning. The MACE will also conduct a MTT to Hawaii and the Far East with the same purpose. More information will be sent out via message traffic, the MACE website, and the MACE newsletter.

The end state of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program is to develop a professional Marine who is an arms carrying professional who cannot only fight under a multitude of circumstances, but understands the moral dimensions of conflict, makes ethical decisions in any situation, and upholds the image and high moral fiber that the Marine Corps has prided itself for more than 230 years.